

In the Claims:

Please amend the claims as set forth below without prejudice to Applicants filing one or more continuation applications with respect to the originally presented claims.

Claims 1-13 (Canceled)

14. (Previously amended) An apparatus for collection of at least one soft tissue sample from a surgical patient, said apparatus comprising:

a rotatable elongated piercing element, said piercing element having a sharpened distal end and a port proximal thereto for receiving a tissue mass;

an elongated cutter at least partially disposed within said piercing element, said elongated cutter being rotatable relative to the piercing element and said elongated cutter having a distal cutting end translatable distally and proximally relative to the port of the piercing element for harvesting a tissue mass received within said port of said piercing element; and

a device for automatically rotating the piercing element after severing of a sample with said elongated cutter, wherein rotation of the piercing element is effected by rotation of the elongated cutter.

15. (Canceled)

16. (Previously presented) The apparatus of Claim 14, wherein multiple samples can be obtained about a longitudinal axis of said piercing element without manually rotating said piercing element.

17. (Canceled)

18. (previously presented) The apparatus of Claim 14 wherein said device for automatically rotating the piercing element provides rotation of the piercing element after severing of a tissue sample and prior to retraction of said elongated cutter proximal of said port.

19. (Previously Presented) The apparatus of Claim 14 wherein automatic rotation of the piercing element is effected by rotation of the elongated cutter when the distal cutting end of the elongated cutter is advanced distally of the port.

20. (Previously presented) The apparatus of Claim 14 wherein rotation of the elongated cutter is mechanically coupled to rotation of the piercing element when the elongated cutter is disposed in at least one position with respect to the port of the piercing element, and wherein rotation of the elongated cutter is mechanically decoupled from rotation of the piercing element when the elongated cutter is disposed in at least one different position with respect to the port.

21. (Previously Presented) A method for rotating a biopsy probe about a longitudinal axis thereof comprising the steps of:

providing a biopsy probe comprising an elongated piercing element having a sharpened distal end and a port proximal thereto, and an elongated tubular cutter disposed coaxially and slidably within a lumen of said piercing element; and

automatically rotating the piercing element after severing of a sample with said elongated cutter, wherein rotation of the piercing element is effected by rotation of the elongated cutter.

22. (Previously Presented) The method of Claim 21 comprising the step of rotating said piercing element a predetermined number of degrees in association with motion of said cutter.

23. (Previously presented) The method of Claim 21 comprising rotating said cutter a predetermined number of degrees to effect rotation of said piercing element.

24. (Currently amended) The method of Claim 21 comprising the steps of:

covering said port of said piercing element by advancing said cutter to a first distal position;

inserting said piercing element within a patient;

exposing said port of said piercing element by withdrawing said cutter to a first proximal position;

drawing tissue into said port of said piercing element;

advancing said cutter distally to sever tissue;

rotating said cutter a predetermined number of degrees after severing tissue to effect affect rotation of said piercing element.

25. (Previously presented) The method of Claim 21 comprising the step of mechanically coupling rotation of the cutter to rotation of the piercing element.

26. (Previously presented ) The method of Claim 25 comprising the step of decoupling rotation of the cutter from rotation of the piercing element.

27. (Previously presented) The method of Claim 21 comprising the steps of:

mechanically coupling rotation of the cutter to rotation of the piercing element during one portion of travel of the cutter; and

decoupling rotation of the cutter from rotation of the piercing element during another portion of travel of the cutter.